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## LIBRARY RECRUITING

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## THIRD GENERAL SESSION

I think you will agree that the most important single essential in successful library development is a trained, enthusiastic and competent personnel.

We may bring about the enactment of comprehensive library laws. We may be able to secure appropriations more or less adequate. We may build beautiful and convenient library buildings. We may fill these buildings with well chosen books, but unless we also secure an ample and continuous supply of competent librarians our libraries will not progress and will not justify their existence. In fact, if your librarians are not of the right sort your library laws will not be well framed, your buildings will not be well planned and your books will not be well chosen. In other words, the important element in library work is the human element. Mr. Dana has said that "A library is good only as the librarian makes it so." Perhaps it was the same gentleman who said "A library is 75 per cent librarian."

Now I think you also will agree, from your own experience and from what you have heard of the experience of others, that we still face a shortage of competent library workers. The library schools are unable to supply the demand for trained people and librarians find it impossible to secure satisfactory helpers.

Putting together, then, these two points of agreement, first, the importance of the human element and second, the shortage of the human element, it would seem that something should be done.

The most logical first step would be a diagnosis to determine the cause of the shortage. There are undoubtedly many reasons, but to my mind three causes stand out in bold relief as of sufficient importance to justify study and action. These three causes are as follows: First: Inadequate salaries. Second: Not enough library schools. Third: Lack of knowledge on the part of the general public as to the nature, opportunities and demands of library work. A slight amplifi-

cation of these three causes will constitute this paper.

Let us take first inadequate salaries.

Why do we need to recruit? Do other professions and occupations find it necessary to recruit? We do not hear of recruiting for the medical profession or for the legal profession. Is it not because compensation in those professions is adequate? On the other hand, we find that the United States Army and the United States Navy carry on active and continuous recruiting campaigns. The very word recruiting suggests army and navy. Compensation in these fields is inadequate. Therefore, we advertise, "Get an education while you work," "Join the Navy and see the world." The inadequacy of library salaries has been emphatically brought out in many of the letters received by the Recruiting Committee. Extracts from two of these letters will suffice to show the feeling on this subject among those who are not librarians. The following is from the vocational secretary of a large state university:

However, it is not a question of finding people who are interested in that line of work, but finding people who are willing to make the sacrifice that work in that line entails, due to the low salary schedule.

You will pardon my apparent intrusion into the work of the committee, but it would seem to me that they should concentrate first on raising their salary schedule, then the problem of recruiting workers would probably disappear, and at the same time there would be the additional advantage of having the type of person attracted to the profession of the high quality which you unquestionably desire.

The other is from the president of a small college in the Middle West:

Your circular letter of February 28 asking help in recruiting students for library work is in my hands.

Some three or four years ago one of my daughters took the librarians' course at one of the largest state universities in the United States. The following summer the university asked her to come to them to do substitute work during the summer session. She went and at the close of the summer, the uni-

versity offered her a permanent position in the library but at a salary less than half of what she got the year before as a high school teacher.

After reading your letter I wondered whether or not the meager salaries paid for workers in libraries would not account in large measure for the small number of college and university students who train for librarianship.

A college cannot very well urge its students to go into training for library work when the salaries are so small as compared with other lines of work.

I am glad to note that the A.L.A. has appointed a committee on salaries and I am in hearty sympathy with the program outlined in their report. The work of the A.L.A. Recruiting Committee will be reduced almost in the same proportion as the work of the Salary Committee is effective.

We must overcome the modesty of librarians on the salary question, we must cease to regard library work as missionary work and we must educate library trustees and city councilmen as to the qualifications demanded for librarians and the compensation required. We can still be modest but not unbecomingly so, and we can still be missionaries but well paid ones. To educate city councilmen is another matter and would perhaps require another special committee, but as a library colleague of tender memory once said regarding barbed wire fences, "These can be overcome or underwent." We must in some way reach the point where librarianship shall not be characterized as "good fun and low pay."

The second reason mentioned was that there are not enough library schools. The more important of these institutions are included in the Association of American Library Schools. There are in this group 12 schools located in only 8 different states. Forty states have no full fledged library schools of approved standing. To secure training in one of the best schools residents of these 40 states must go far from home at considerable expense. In many cases this expense is prohibitive and we lose desirable recruits. If I am right in this assumption, then I think the A.L.A. and the Association of American Library Schools and the state library commissions should co-operate in urging the establishment of additional schools

in sections where they seem to be most needed.

The number of librarians in this country is somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000. The annual output of these twelve library schools is approximately 225. The annual supply of recruits then is only about 1 per cent of the total number of librarians. To be sure there are many smaller schools and training classes, but compile your own figures and I think you will find the supply entirely inadequate. Again, instruction in library work is of such a nature that large schools and large classes are not feasible. For this reason as well as for geographical distribution, an increase in the number of schools would seem to be the solution.

The third reason named was lack of knowledge on the part of the general public as to the nature, opportunities and demands of library work. This is the particular sector that the A.L.A. Recruiting Committee has endeavored to occupy by bringing to the general public information regarding library work and by equipping librarians and vocational advisers with printed material on the same subject.

Its work has been done largely through correspondence and the distribution of printed material and is described more in detail in our printed reports. Much of our work was what Mr. Henry might call "broadcasting." It was necessarily so. We could not tell in which particular pool the tempting trout might lie and so our casting had to be broad. We have, however, repeatedly urged that the most effective recruiting is that done by individual librarians in personal conference with promising candidates. If the wrong sort of people become interested in library training through our broadcasting methods, can not the clever men and women in charge of our library schools keep them out?

One writer has said that some present-day librarians went into library work as pages and then followed it as the line of least resistance. I fear that is true. That was the old method of getting into any occupation, but more scientific methods of choosing one's lifework are coming into vogue. Witness the advent of the vocational adviser and the great in-

crease in his numbers. Here is a field to cultivate. The vocational adviser can be of great assistance if he has an accurate idea of the nature of librarianship, is equipped with printed matter and is prepared to refer likely candidates to nearby librarians for

further information and advice. Perhaps in some not far distant millennium we shall each of us be scientifically fitted into our proper grooves and a wise providence will ordain that just enough librarians shall be born.

## RECRUITING FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CANADA

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### THIRD GENERAL SESSION

All Canada is divided (from a library standpoint) into two parts: The province of Ontario and the remaining provinces; in the first of which are more libraries than in all the rest combined.

There is one regularly organized training school for librarians which meets during the Michaelmas term (approximately September 6 to December 10) and which is under the direction of the inspector of public libraries for the Province of Ontario. While provincial in its maintenance, it is national in its scope.

There is a summer library school in connection with McGill University, in Montreal, under the direction of the librarian of that University.

There is no national library association. There is a flourishing association for Ontario, which meets in Toronto during Easter week, and there is a small association in the maritime provinces. An effort was made to form an association in the prairie provinces, but the war, with its economic results, has prevented its development.

Library work as a profession is but of recent growth with us; in fact, we are still in the missionary stage where conversion of the heathen unbeliever is necessary. He or it (individual, corporation or government) needs complete change of heart. He is beyond logic.

The subject for today, "recruiting," suggests that there is an organized body of persons whose object is to fight for some principle which the organization thinks is worth while. Before we can ask persons to join our ranks, we have to explain the object of our army and what are the rewards for service in it, two essentially reasonable questions which one would expect the recruit to ask.

Time has passed when the sergeant, with his ribbons and his cane, and dressed in his walking-out garb, could stand on the corners and invite the stray passer-by to join the army, and seal it with a drink or two and a shilling. And the time is passing when we can allure people into the ranks of the library army by telling them of the opportunity for self-effacement and ultimate immortality.

Therefore, if I am to be a recruiting officer and ask persons to join the army of librarians, the first thing I have to do is to reorganize the army on a war footing. In other words, I have to see that the army is a well-fed and well-led army, and well supplied with all that makes for effective campaigning.

There may be some here who question the analogy of the army, possibly because their ideas of an army relate almost entirely to discipline, repression and loss of individuality. Such persons feel like the mounted infantry man about whom Kipling tells us in one of his poems of the South African War and who, scouting on his own, with responsibilities on himself and thinking of the time when he was merely a number, or perhaps better, a pawn, exclaimed:

I used to belong to an army once,  
Gawd, what a rum little army once,  
Rum little, dumb little army once.

And perhaps there are a few such regiments or brigades in the general army of librarians. (For an illustration of the deadliness of routine, the influence of atmosphere and the difficulties of the struggle to be free, let me recommend to you Beresford's recent novel, *The prisoners of Hartling*.)

But to return to the army, I cannot recruit unless I have made the object of the army appear to be worth while (which presupposes that I believe it to be worth while), unless I